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"Well, Li'les' Kid, mebbe 'tis one o' dem dreams. Gee!"

TONY'S WHITE ROOM

AND HOW THE WHITE ROSE OF LOVE BLOOMED AND FLOURISHED THERE

BY

WINIFRED RICH

The strength of the strong is Love,
The righting of wrong is Love;
The good that we give is Love,
The Life that we live is Love.

Agness Greene Foster.

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TO
MY FRIEND
ELLEN FEARN CRANE

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INTRODUCTION

Can a lad of ten grow up in one of our modern cities and be ignorant of the meaning of the word "love"?

In my own kindergarten the majority of little ones had not the word in their vocabulary, and these children were many degrees removed from the tenement class. In our California playgrounds the word is seldom used among the children. Ask the simple question, "Do you love sister or mother?" and the answer is a blank stare. Use the word "like" and a ready "Sure" is the response.

But in the tenements of our cities this problem is not one to cause wonder. A brief word-picture will be sufficient for the reader more readily to understand Tony's ignorance as well as the attitude of Maggie and Mrs. Murphy. The average tenements are in a locality densely populated and badly congested. The types of faces one meets in the many alleys represent the various stages of starvation and spent energies. The women seem to have lost all hold on their womanhood, and the little ones are prematurely old in experience and vice.

We will go into a home. It is a basement room, damp, dark and foul. A family of seven or more occupy this shelter. The children are unkempt and pitifully hungry; the father is in the penitentiary, and the mother in the factory. Imagine the weary,

work-stunned mother coming home to feed her brood at night, after twelve hours of steady labor and only sixty cents to show for her toil. Is it possible for her to give any expression to her mother-love, if any there may be? Can you conceive of love on the lips of this family?

We can go into a better home. It may be on the first or top floor of a tenement, according to the wages of the parents. Here we find in two rooms a family of ten. The father, a foreigner, has come to America to obtain wealth. He may receive a dollar a day, it may be more, but at the merciless expense of his manhood; for as the mills of men grind out the progress of the world, they also grind away the divinity and humanity of a man's being. He is a mere cog in a wheel. Once his ideals are gone, drink becomes his refuge, and the man, who ten or fifteen years ago stepped hopefully upon America's soil, now becomes a brain-stunned, labor-worn, drunken beast. The mother goes into the factory and for twelve hours is deprived of her privileges as a mother in order that she also may become a cog in the wheel that grinds out the hopes of the human race. The little ones increase and they in turn go out upon the street, all for the dollar and the lust of gain. Can a boy or girl breathe in love from the streets? Can the over-worked, intoxicated father exemplify the father-love? Can the mother, broken and crushed, find time at night to caress her children? Just picture a home-coming from these parents and ask where the word "love" would find its place.

It is difficult for us, shielded as we are by environment, to understand this problem; but when we take into consideration that a child gains his knowledge of love from the home and from the parents, we can readily comprehend the situation.

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CHAPTER I
THE STORY

TONY stood on the pavement staring at a sign which hung across the sidewalk from a doorway of the brick building. That the word thereon stood for "Kindergarten" he well knew, though to him the letters were as meaningless as Greek. In the bitterness of his heart he had wandered far from his usual haunts. To him the world was but a dreary court, where every man lived a law unto himself and for himself.

From the open windows came the busy chatter of the children, and a soft, low voice, which caused the small listener to open his eyes very wide indeed.

The curtains blew apart, giving him a glimpse of a tall figure bending over a wee brown head.

Tony glanced furtively up and down the narrow street. No one was in sight; even Mike Casey's saloon was minus the usual hangers-on.

Through the open gate at one side of the building he

perceived a narrow alley. Into this, with the caution of the street gamin, he stole, and as stealthily closed the gate behind him. As he had anticipated, the open window was just low enough to be reached by the aid of a box.

"Gee!" he excitedly whispered, "dat's de dope, sure."

Silently down the board walk he flew till he reached the playground. There he paused for a breathless moment to stare uncomprehendingly at the swings and sand-boxes. His restless eyes discovered a small box in a corner. This he seized and bore to the window.

Balancing himself on his bare toes and holding tightly to the window-ledge, he could gain, by standing upon this rather insecure pedestal, a very good view of the room and what he craved even more—the teacher who spoke with the soft voice.

The child's eyes grew round as he stared incredulously at the immaculate scene before him.

Wonderful pictures hung upon the white walls; flowers and delicate ferns grew in profusion in the windows; everything was spotless, and the room breathed rest and happiness.

"Gee!" exclaimed the awestruck watcher.

His eyes fell upon the circle of little ones, some of whom, though they were far above him in the social world, he knew.

There were Elsa and Otto Gruenberger; they represented

From the open windows came the busy chatter of the children, and a soft, low voice.

the greatest aristocracy possible. For did not their father own a delicatessen shop where one could buy delectable dainties such as bologna, sauerkraut, and buns with raisins in them?

Even Danny Mulligan was there. His father owned the honored distinction of being policeman on a wonderful beat where ladies lived in palaces, and the children ate pie and candy-sticks three times a day.

Tony smiled absently at Danny, whose kindness in permitting him to stroke his father's official club had been an honor not soon to be forgotten.

However, in another moment all these glories vanished, for he had caught a glimpse of the teacher as she sat in the circle with the children. Her voice, which had attracted Tony from the first, now held him spellbound.

"Well, children, how many bright faces I see to-day! And are we ready for the story?"

At once a distinct hum and an air of eager expectancy pervaded the room. Tony caught the infection and leaned eagerly forward, to the peril of his position.

"Then, we must sit very still and listen very carefully. Otto, your feet would look better on the floor. Yes, that is better. I wonder if Lizzette could keep her hands from Anna's hair ribbon. Are we ready? For this is another story with a hidden meaning."

Tony hung tightly to the window-ledge, his eyes riveted

upon the teacher, every nerve strained so as not to lose a single word of what was to follow.

The musical voice went on:

"Once upon a time there lived a little child who had in his care and keeping a wonderful white room.

"This little room was the home of a beautiful spirit who grew only under the sunshine of good thoughts and deeds. So, of course, it was necessary that the windows and doors of the little room should be always wide open for the sunlight to stream in.

"But, somehow, this little child did not know how to care for his little white room or the beautiful spirit, for he lived in a dirty alley where not one ray of God's sunlight ever shone. He knew nothing whatever of loving thoughts or of good deeds. So, as the windows and doors were ever closed, the little white room grew darker and darker, and the spirit drooped, just like the pretty flower Elsa forgot to put in water yesterday. And the strangest thing of all was, that the child's face showed just how the spirit felt. He was never happy; his eyes were never glad; his lips never smiled, but drooped at the corners like the points of a crescent moon hung upside down in the sky.

"One day he thought he would go out beyond the dirty alley to see what he could find. And what do you think he saw?

"A garden! A wonderful garden full of flowers and

laughing children; even grown-ups were there, and every one seemed so happy! They gathered the flowers, and no sooner were they picked than new ones grew on the bushes.

"The little child wonderingly watched them, and so rapt was he that he did not know that a beautiful angel was standing near him till he heard a whisper in his ear:

"'Come, little child, come with me.' Soon he found himself standing beside a bush of soft white roses, the fragrance of which filled the entire garden.

"'Pick one,' whispered the angel, 'and place it in the little white room. They are Roses of Love and will never fade.'

"The child had never seen roses, had never heard of love. But he knew of the hurt spirit in the dark little room. So he obeyed the angel.

"No sooner had he picked the rose than what do you think happened to the little room?

"The windows and doors flew open. The little, drooping spirit caught the fragrance of the white rose, awoke and began to sing. Then the child looked up at the angel's face and smiled—yes, smiled.

"You see, the Rose of Love had filled the little white room, and had made the spirit so glad!

"'Now, go home,' whispered the angel, 'and show your rose to those who have never seen nor heard of love. Go,—open other little darkened rooms.'

"So the child left the beautiful garden, but he carried the White Rose of Love close to his heart, for that was his little white room."

A solemn hush fell upon the youthful group.

Outside, Tony was thinking deeply; he was also wondering a great deal. The teacher's white hands, her face and her voice were new types to him. No one in the Row or in the tenement ever smiled with her eyes as did this girl-woman who stood before the circle holding out her arms to them all.

"O babies!" she cried. "My little ones, I do want you to know more of this beautiful, wonderful love. Do you know, dearies, it will change your little lives and make you—oh, so happy!"

Eagerly and heedlessly Tony leaned forward—a crash, a thud! Scrambling to his feet, Tony flung open the gate and fled with all possible speed, not stopping until he reached the tenement in the Row.

He sank down on the first doorstep to rest and incidentally to think over all he had seen and heard.

"Gee!" He looked dazed and bewildered. "D'yer t'ink it's 'nother dem dreams? Thet room an' dem purty picters—an' her! Gee! I hadn't orter butt inter her yarn. Say, dat wuz bad, fer sure!"

He rose sorrowfully and thrust both grimy hands down deep into his pockets.

THE STORY

"Say, dat's de dope 'bout de room all right, but ain't never heerd of love any; wusht I knowed if it is ter—eat."

He walked thoughtfully into the tumbled-down building and through a labyrinth of halls and stairways, past dirty babies, quarreling children, and slatternly women.

Before a door at the end of the hall he paused to listen. Hearing no sound, he entered the room and closed the door gently behind him.

Owing to the coat of dirt and cobwebs upon the narrow window, the light was dim. Tony's sharp eyes glanced anxiously toward a tiny bundle lying on one of the broken beds. All was quiet.

He sat down on one of the boxes lying on the floor, his head bowed in his hands, and systematically began to meditate over his morning's adventure.

The bundle stirred, and a feeble wail filled the room. Instantly Tony gathered in his thin arms a young infant who reached up two dirty little hands to clutch his coat.

"Gee, Li'les' Kid, youse de gamest feller I ever see—sleepin' all de time Tony wuz out wid de swells. Say, Li'les' Kid, jes open yer eyes. I'se got de yarn fer you! Say—why—yer smiles jes de way she looks—ef yer don't!"

He straightened the single garment and cuddled the little one to him.

"Well, Li'les' Kid, mebbe 't is one o' dem dreams. Gee!

D' y'u know, 'tain't nothin' like I see before. She looks like you feel, sof' an' nice."

His eyes fell upon the filth and barrenness of the poverty-stricken room, which he saw for the first time. But Tony was somewhat of a philosopher, so merely shrugged his bent shoulders vaguely.

"Aw, wot's de use! Say, Li'les' Kid, de lady wot Tony tells yer 'bout is er bang up one. Never growed in er tenerment, yer bet! She sed us a yarn 'bout er feller an' his white room wot wuz allus shut. Say, didjer know yer hed er white room an' er spurrit? Dat's a burrd, Li'les' Kid. Seen one onct. Well, dis yere kid got inter er yard an' picked some roses,—roses of love she called 'em—an' dey busted de room open. Gee! Ain't never seen nothin' full 'nough ter bust open here."

He looked down into the blue eyes of the babe wistfully.

"Say, Li'les' Kid, 'tis love, an' Tony don't know wot love is,—wusht I did."

The babe whimpered.

"Hungry, Li'les' Kid? Seems ter me youse allus hungry. Why, me an' de kids don' eat ha'f yer do. Youse got de tank, fer sure. Never min', yer goin' ter hev love—ef it's ter eat—Li'les' Kid. Nothin's too good fer dis girl baby, sure."

All the while he was talking, Tony had been busy. From an old cigar-box, which he drew from under the

bed, he produced a cup of milk and a crust of bread. These he fed to the famished baby.

His face was full of perplexity as he pondered over the possible meaning of the new word.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet crying joyfully:

"Why, Murphy'll know! She's got all kinds of dope. An', gee, Li'les' Kid, youse kin hev yer li'le white room full, jes t'ink, full an' bustin'!"

Hugging the wondering child closely to him, Tony hurried out into the halls, down the stairway to Mrs. Murphy's room.

He found that worthy lady singing lustily over the washtubs. Pouring from the adjoining room, an avalanche of small Murphys dressed in the briefest of costumes, overpowered him, screaming shrilly "fer ter see the Li'les' Kid!"

"Whisht, now, ye spalpeens! Ter bed wid yez, an' think shame, an' none on yez havin' ez much ez er stitch on yer backs. Git now."

One by one the youthful band of defeated Celts retreated to the citadel of the family bed.

Mrs. Murphy gathered the remainder of the garments lying about and threw them into the tubs. This done, she sat down and, after wiping her red face on her apron, took the babe from Tony's arms.

"Arrah noo, Tony, lad, 't is a dirty gurrl yez do be after havin'."

She critically surveyed the infant, while Tony, an absent expression on his face, looked on. He was far away in the Kindergarten room, the words, "roses of love, of love," flitting through his brain like the refrain of a sweet song.

He looked sadly at the child.

"Dey's all de clothes she's got, Murphy."

"An' 'tis no more my kids hev, Tony. 'T is ter Murphy yez'll bring her to-morrow, lad, an' 'tis me who will wash de clothes. Aye, an' 'tis a scrubbin' de babe will be after a-havin', sure."

The boy looked at the kindly Irishwoman, then, coming closely to her, he earnestly asked:

"Murphy, wot's love?"

In her astonishment Mrs. Murphy almost dropped the babe, but after a withering glance of scorn she rose and bundled the little one into Tony's arms.

"De divil fly awa' wid yez an' yer fool questions! Wot does a bye be after a-askin' fer love fer? Sure, an' 'tis not in er tiniment yez finds it, Oi'll be a-thinkin'!"

She bent over the tubs once more.

"But, Murphy," Tony persisted, "ez it er flower or somepin' ter eat—er—wot is it?"

"Ter eat, yez ask? An' 'tis an empty stomick yez'll be a-havin' ef yez live on love. 'T is not a fillin' kin' o' food."

Tony gasped—not filling! "But—"

"See here, Tony, yez air a bit daft; all folks is, wot be

after a-thinkin' o' sech fool talk. Love? Pooh! 'T is wot I married Pat fer, an' not a whiff av it Oi've seen sence. Git along wid yez, an' min'—let love be, an' tek care o' yer kid."

Very slowly, Tony went back through the dingy halls.

"Murphy don' know ever't'ing," he muttered stubbornly. "She's not hed any, dat's wot. Dem roses an' flowers were picters, picters o' love, same ez de white room an' de heart."

In the doorway, dressed in a dirty, flowing kimono, stood a young girl whose pretty face was almost hidden by a huge dilapidated pompadour hanging over one eye.

"Say, Maggie," Tony called, "does yer know wot love is? Gee! Wot's de matter? Sick?" For the girl had turned very white, and covering her face with her kimono she fled within the room.

"Gee, de bunch is crazy. Say, Li'les' Kid, I'll bet dey's all hed some love, but not de kin' she sed. Nope. Jes bet dey's hed some udder kin' o' love dope, an' dey's got sick. Yer did onct on er banana, 'member, Li'les' Kid? Now, de teacher's kin' iz de real t'ing, yer bet 't is,—de real t'ing, fer sure."

Within the room again, seated upon the old rocker, Tony ruminated at length.

"Jes de way she looked showed she wuz no bogus. She hed er smile dat made yer feel like de sun after er rain. She sed, Li'les' Kid, d'yer hear?" The baby was fast asleep, her head in the hollow of Tony's arm.

"Never min', yer kin sleep, an' I kin talk jes de same. She sed de yarn wuz all picters. I know roses. Seen 'em onct on a bang-up swell where I sells de papers. Love ez purty — like de roses, dat's sure."

Thoughtfully he watched the breathing of the infant, noted the blue circles under the long lashes, and the thin, little wrinkled cheeks.

"Say, yer er goin' ter be red an' fat, mebbe, when dis love bizness ez begun."

From the hallway came the sound of a scuffle. Instantly gathering the baby to him, Tony rose and, with an expression of intense bitterness on his face, retreated to the corner of the room.

The door burst open and two little boys noisily entered.

His anxious look vanished, an expression of good-natured annoyance taking its place.

"Shet up, youse, ye'll wake de kid."

"Got anyt'ing ter eat?" hungrily demanded the older boy, looking sharply about the empty room.

"Nope, yer come ter de wrong shop."

"She's hed some." The boy glanced suspiciously at the babe in Tony's arms.

Both youngsters were as unlike Tony in their features and in their manners as three boys could possibly be.

"Sure," Tony grinned cheerfully.

"Aw, yer allus give her de grub."

The wolfish glare which accompanied the boy's remark was shared by the younger one, who, having been on an exploring expedition and having overturned every dish, box, and even the bed in his search, now joined his brother in defiantly facing Tony.

"We're hungry." It was the daily cry. Tony sighed.

"Same here. See here, kids, you'd better go an' hunt fer grub. She—ain't been here ter-day. Mebbe she—won't come ter-night. I'll fin' de grub fer yer after I sells de papers, see? Ain't hed nothin' myself," he added in an underbreath.

"Say, I tells yer, go out an' t'ink yer full; it makes you feel better."

The two little boys looked at each other inquiringly. Tony softly soothed the fretful child.

"Say, kids, it ain't no use 'n kickin', so hike."

They grumbled somewhat, but after a more vigorous search started for the door, Tony watching them curiously.

"Say," he called out, "did yer ever heer of love?"

They shook their heads; the youngest asked greedily:

"Anyt'ing ter eat?"

"Dunno; it's a queer dope. Say, ef you kids fin' out wot it is I'll give yer some pennies. Are yer game?"

One boy was busily fastening his trousers to his waist by a string. The other, furtively watching Tony's face, suspiciously asked:

"Who tells yer 'bout it?"

"Aw, a swell told me." Tony's tones were non-committal.

"Ax him, an' he'll give yer some."

"Dat's so." Tony looked out of the dingy window. "You'se kin cut now, an' go sof', de kid 's er sleep."

Once more silence fell upon the room.

Softly Tony laid the babe down on the bed. Walking to the window he looked out upon the noisy court below.

"Dat's wot I'll do. Murphy'll hev de kid an' I kin go."

"Gee!" He hurriedly brushed his eyes.

"Never hed sech er t'ing hold me like dis yere love. Makes me t'ink of de—sun, fer sure. Roses of love—of love. Whyee—sort of makes me like de Li'les' Kid, sof' an' nice, jes ter say it—love—love."

CHAPTER II

"WOT IS LOVE?"

ELLEN GRAY, or Miss Ellen, as the children called her, was seated by her desk in the Kindergarten room, busily threading needles.

The early morning sun slowly drifted into the schoolroom upon the circle of tiny chairs that were awaiting their daily occupants.

At the sound of a footstep, Miss Ellen glanced toward the doorway, and there she saw, standing on the threshold, a boy, the oddest specimen of childhood that, even in her varied experience, she had ever beheld.

Judging by his size, he might have been ten years or so; judging by the care-worn lines on his face and the sadness in his blue eyes, he might have been three times as old.

Miss Ellen rose. "Why, good morning, my little man, I am very glad to see you. Won't you come in and sit down?"

The boy silently obeyed, his eyes riveted upon Miss

Ellen's face. If the young teacher was studying her strange visitor, he, without question, was studying her.

"What is your name, dear?"

Dear! He turned the word over in his mind, as one who has tasted for the first time an unaccustomed sweet morsel.

"Tony," he slowly answered.

"And my name is Miss Ellen. Now that we are so well acquainted, won't you sit down in this little chair?"

Somewhat bewildered, Tony seated himself, his eyes resting on the white hand of the young teacher. Pointing abruptly, he said:

"Say, dat's like de Li'les' Kid."

Miss Ellen at once became interested.

"Yes? And who is the Li'les' Kid?"

"Me baby sister." The note of pride in Tony's voice did not escape the questioner. "A baby sister! How lovely! And have you any little brother?"

"Two." The tone was curt.

"Why!" exclaimed Miss Ellen, keenly watching the expression on the boy's sensitive face. "A baby sister, two brothers,—a mother, of course, and a father?" The question, indirect as it was, brought a look of such intense hatred and settled bitterness into Tony's face that she was startled.

He had been looking out of the window, the very one famous for the adventure of the day before.

Suddenly he turned and faced the girl, who was watching him intently, and eagerly demanded:

"Say, I come here ter fin' out 'bout dat yarn yer spieled ter de kids yest'day — de yarn 'bout de white room, an' de feller wot found de yard of roses, an' what I wants ter know is 'bout de love. See? I knows de heart an' de roses,— but — love — wot is love?"

Tony was standing close to Miss Ellen, his slender body, visible through the ragged clothes, trembling with excitement.

Miss Ellen looked deeply into the blue eyes and read even more than his appeal had conveyed. In the demand of the boy, coming from his starved soul, she heard the echo of the universal call of the world for the deeper knowledge of a spiritualized human love.

She had seen the tragedy in the expression of his face which her reference to his mother had brought. But being wise in her understanding of child life, she very gently asked:

"Were you here yesterday? I didn't see you."

Tony hung his head for a moment, then sadly answered:

"I wasn't fitten ter come in. I swiped er look tru de winder. Dat wuz bad — er buttin' inter de yarn."

"Never mind, dear, I am very glad you heard the story. Now, to your question. Before I answer it, Tony, tell me all about your baby sister."

Tony grinned.

"Aw, she is jes a baby girl—but, gee! She is sof' an' warm; and when yer holds her, it jes makes yer feel like her. See?" Miss Ellen nodded, her eyes brimming.

"She can't do nothin' but eat an' yell, but she makes all de days like all sunny days. She is smily, too, an' hol's onter yer,—say, I takes de hull care of her; dere's no one ter do it but me, an' yer bet she gets all dere is comin', fer sure."

"And the little brothers?"

Tony shifted uneasily in his seat.

"Aw, dey's allus er kickin' an' er swipin' de Li'les' Kid's grub. Say, dey's like all de udder kids in de tenerment—dey's jes bad all over."

"Oh, I am so sorry! It must make you feel very badly."

Tony looked up at the grave brown eyes, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Aw, dey don't keep me 'wake none. I don' care 'bout dem kids. Dey's jes soon do me dirt, an' I buys all de grub fer dem—dat dey don' swipe." He glanced out of the window once more.

Miss Ellen leaned forward, touching Tony's grimy hands.

"Do you *like* your little sister?"

"Betcher life I do," was the prompt response.

"And you care for her, keep her with you all night, feed her, dress and bathe her and—love her?"

"Do you like your little sister?" "Betcher life I do," was the prompt response.

Bewildered, Tony looked up.

"Love her? I ain't onter de game."

"Yes, dear, you are on to the game. You love the little sister and have never known it.

"Love is something within your own heart that makes you do for the baby the things you do. You must never say the word 'like,' for that is a weak word. You must say 'love'; it means so much more than 'like.' You like a person with your head, but you love with your heart and soul. When you love, you fill the little white room I told you of yesterday, and you make the spirit glad."

She looked earnestly down at the child's face as he struggled to adjust the new word to his emotions.

"Gee!" he muttered, "I hed de dope an' never knowed it. But say, I ain't heerd it before."

Miss Ellen smiled gently.

"No? Well, Tony, you know it now, and you must believe in your love. Say it over, 'I love the Li'les' Kid.' Do you see?"

"Yep, I t'ink so. Say, ain't it jes like hate,—dat's stronger 'n not-a-likin'?"

"That's just it. Now I want you to listen very carefully. I think we had better go over there in the sunlight." She led the boy to the center of the room, and in the little chairs, in a halo of sunshine, the two sat down.

"Tony, how does the sun feel to you?"

"Warm an' sof' an' nice."

"Yes. That is just the way love feels."

Tony nodded. "Yer bet 't is! Say, it made me feel like dat las' night jes er sayin' it."

"You are a dear laddie." Miss Ellen's eyes were glowing softly as she turned to him.

"Tony," she asked, "have you ever heard of God?"

Tony reflected. It did not dawn upon him that the sacred name which fell so reverently from Miss Ellen's lips could ever have had the slightest association with the ill-pronounced word handled so profanely in the tenement.

"Nope," he answered slowly.

Miss Ellen thought for a moment, then leaning forward, facing the boy, she earnestly and carefully began:

"Tony, dear, when you hold your baby sister in your arms, care for and love her, do you feel cross toward her or do you feel full of love?"

Tony's eyes danced. "Gee! a feller could n't git cross wid 'er; why, she makes yer feel good all tru. You bet!"

"Of course you do. You could n't harm her while you love her. And the baby, is she good and sweet?"

The boy's eyes grew large. "Why, she can't help bein' good. She's er li'le bunch of—love. Dat's wot she is."

Miss Ellen smiled. How quaint was this little lad, and how easily did he fall into her line of thought.

"Well then, Tony, all this beautiful love within your

heart and in the baby's, everything that is beautiful and good, comes from God, and is God.

"The sun and the rain, the flowers and the green grass, everything in our lovely out-of-doors, come from God, to show us what His love is."

She paused, impressed by the expression of awe on the boy's face, then thoughtfully went on:

"There is a thought-picture of God's home—a picture just like the white room and the heart; this home, we say, is above the blue sky, and there is a garden there far more beautiful than any in our city parks, full of roses whiter even than those I spoke of, and the air in that wonderful home-place is full of love—love which you and I can never dream of knowing till we go there." Miss Ellen's eyes glowed softly. "Why, Tony, if you could gather all the glorious, precious things together, thoughts full of love, everybody who is good, a city full of these, then you might have just an idea of how wonderful God is. You see, He wanted us to grow like Him, so He gave us His own self—His love. We are to love each other and to be kind to each other, because that is the way to be like God. And oh, Tony, God loves us far more than we can ever think of loving. Do you understand, dear?"

He nodded vaguely.

Miss Ellen pondered. How could she teach this boy of the deeper fatherhood and of the brooding motherhood of

the Creator when even of human love he knew nothing, save that which he gave to the little babe.

Drawing the boy more closely to her and taking his hands in hers, she said: "Tony, dear, He loves you and the Li'les' Kid. He loves me and my babies here. He loves—your mother, too."

Tony looked up quickly, then turned away his head.

"Aw, yer don' come dat on me."

"But I do, Tony. He loves us all. Now, dear, my time is up, but you are going to stay awhile?"

"Yep, ef I won't be in de way."

"No, dear, I want you to stay as long as you can. Sit here in this chair." She bent down and whispered: "Tony, say it over and over to yourself: 'God is love. I love Him, He loves me, and I love the Li'les' Kid.' Will you?"

He looked up at her mistily, and shyly added, "An' Tony loves yer too, ef yer don' mind."

Bless your heart, dear. And Miss Ellen loves you too, ever so much."

Tony sat all through the session which followed, like one living in a dream, a dream in which only he and Miss Ellen moved.

Sitting there in the clean, sunlit room, the circle of happy faces about him, his own heart full of his new discovery and his active mind already reaching out for deeper knowledge, Tony listened to the story of a more perfect

love, the love which forgives, no matter how deep the injury.

Forcibly, yet gently, the little sermon was preached. But Tony's eyes grew hard and the lines of bitterness returned to his face. Miss Ellen grew troubled as she noted the change, for this strange, sad boy, with his longing cry, had taken hold of her heart, while the desire to help him became very strong within her.

At recess, after the last wee straggler had trotted out of sight, Tony rose, and, walking slowly to the teacher, said gravely: "Say, ain't sure 'bout dat feller wot yer telled of—God. Am er fixin' it all in my head dis way,—sorter: 'We's like de kids out dere,' pointing to the yard full of frolickers, 'an' He is de same ez you.' Ain't dat it?"

There was not a trace of irreverence in the untutored child's comparison, only his quaint mannerism, his evident love for the mental pictures, which is ofttimes so difficult to instil in the mind of the practical child of the tenement.

Miss Ellen understood him at once. "Yes, dear, only, even though I love my babies here, I can never love them as He does. You love your baby sister, but He loves you both a thousand times more."

"All ter onct?" The question came from a very astonished boy.

"Why, He loves the entire city full of people, Tony.

Oh, little lad, love comes from Him; there is no limit to God's love! Do you understand?"

Tony drew his hands from out his trousers' pockets, as he slowly and thoughtfully answered: "I t'ink I do. It's too big fer er li'le kid like me to ketch onter ter onct. It'll take time, an' mebbe when I tells de Li'les' Kid 'bout it all an' 'bout Him, I'll get onter it more."

Miss Ellen patted his thin shoulders encouragingly.

"Come to-morrow, Tony, and come early so that we can have a long talk. Don't forget to think love and to say it. You see, dear, you have it in you, and all you need to do is to open the doors and windows wide in the little room and to say over and over: 'I am God's child, and God is love.'"

Back in the turbulent tenement with the babe in his arms, Tony repeated the whole wonderful story. At its conclusion he paused, as slowly but convincingly there flashed in his mind—the love that forgives.

He looked down at the wee brown head on his arm; he looked at the dirty room. He saw with the eyes of one who has been awakened to the higher possibilities of life, only to be confronted by the deadly barrier of environment.

With a sob of passionate bitterness, grief and despair, he cried: "Aw, 't ain't no use, Li'les' Kid! 'T ain't no use! We can't never be no better, 'cause—she—ain't never done us no good. She—don't even like us, nor feed us. Oh, Li'les' Kid—she—ain't—no good! An' we mus' love

her, 'cause Miss Ellen sed that He wants us ter love even such ez—an'—an'—baby—I can't—I can't." He bowed his head upon the warm little body, and for the first time in years the tears trickled down his cheeks.

CHAPTER III

THE WHITE ROSE

"OPEN up yer squinters, Li'les' Kid, 'cause Tony wants yer ter listen. Say, does yer t'ink dat dis is Tony wot's er holdin' yer, or does yer t'ink it's de dream Tony wot he hez been er tellin' of? Gee! It's 'nough ter make yer dizzy de way me heart has been on de move,—ever sence las' week, an' sence Miss Ellen told me 'bout Him, an' His boy. Say, Li'les' Kid, eat yer grub an' go ter sleep. I've gotter go an' see Miss Ellen. Can't stay dis mornin' long, 'cause—'cause—she—might come back an' fin' yer all alone. See?"

Tony paused, a scowl gathering on his forehead.

The baby having finished her frugal breakfast began to fret sleepily. Tony rocked her gently to and fro on his knees, softly talking all the while.

"Yep, an' Miss Ellen, she telled me 'bout His house an' His boy, wot He sent ter us ter show jes how we orter love. Gee, an' dey jes up an' done Him dirt, dey did,

an' d'yer know, Li'les' Kid, He loved 'em jes de same. Why—ee! Li'les' Kid, ef yer ain't 'sleep an' me er tellin' yer de greates' yarn ever. Aw, yer don' know it, but yer b'long ter Him, an' ef Tony kin, yer'll not grow up in dis tenerment where sof', white baby girls grow up 'thout knowin' 'bout de li'le white rooms an' de roses of love."

The boy carried the sleeping child to the mattress and carefully covered her with an old shawl.

"Aw, Li'les' Kid," he whispered, bending over her, the great longing of his soul in his blue eyes, "yer er goin' ter be like Miss Ellen, does yer hear? Yer must, oh, yer must, an' yer li'le white room mus' feel only purty words! O baby—Li'les' Kid—don't listen ter—her—will yer? Don' even look at—her; she won't fill de white room an' she don' know 'bout Him an' His boy. Sh—dere! Youse kin sleep; Tony'll be back—very soon."

Softly he stole out of the room. At the end of the hall he paused to give a signal whistle. Immediately Maggie, untidy and drooping, opened the door.

"Say," Tony lowered his voice, "keep yer eyes on de kid, will yer?"

The girl nodded.

"I'll be back soon. Say, keep yer eyes peeled. See?"

Maggie seized Tony's arm as he turned to go.

"Will she see me, d'yer think, the teacher yer told me 'bout?"

The boy took mental inventory of the girl's appearance and shook his head.

"Miss Ellen, she ain't stuck on dirt none, an' yer hair all over yer face, but yer got er nice face, an' Miss Ellen ain't no swell wot'll cut yer. Betcherlife! She'll talk ter yer 'bout de inside yer white room I telled yer of. Gee! It's yer dat 'll t'ink of de outside after she gits tru."

Maggie's blue eyes grew large with childlike apprehension.

"I ain't fit, Tony, I ain't good."

"Aw, Miss Ellen, she's good 'nough fer two of yer. Anyway, she'll not t'row it up ter yer. Yer see, Maggie, Miss Ellen, she's got nex' ter Him an' knows His game. He sees de white room an' I don' know how, but yer gits clean outside by yerself, widout yer know it, seems like. I'll tell Miss Ellen; she loves everybody. So long, Maggie. Keep yer eyes peeled."

It had been a wonderful week to Tony, and so swift had been the shifting scenes that his brain whirled.

The great change in his inner consciousness had created a greater change in his outer life, in his associations with the tenement people, with the boys, and with the Li'les' Kid.

Also, unconsciously, he had sought the cleansing powers of water and soap, and when he had presented himself before Miss Ellen on the second morning, his shiny face

redolent of Mrs. Murphy's tub water, she did not smile; instead, she introduced him to the Kindergarten bathroom. Tony, marveling silently at the "dishes on de wall," learned his first lesson in the art of perfect ablution.

The wonderful week had but one discord. At Miss Ellen's earnest request, Tony had brought the two little brothers to her. But they had behaved like wild animals, for after demoralizing the school they had ignobly fled, leaving poor Tony mortified and inconsolable.

"Never mind, dear, you can bring the Li'les' Kid to me; she will be good, I am sure," Miss Ellen comforted, cheering the boy until the memory of the event had faded away into the misty past.

Tony's mind went through all these details as he ran to the school.

Miss Ellen cheerily greeted him as he held up his clean face and hands for her inspection.

"Clean little Tony! Come right here to me—close." She drew him up to her, holding him in the shelter of her arm.

"And, dear, how is the little white room?" Tony shook his head, his blue eyes wistfully looking up into her deep brown ones.

"Aw, it ain't busted yet."

"No? Do you know why?"

The boy hung his head, the red flush dully spreading

over his pale face and to his neck. Only too well he knew what Miss Ellen meant.

"Oh, Tony, can't you forgive? You, a little boy, who has been shown love, can't you forgive some one who has never known about the white room?"

She tried to study the expression on the child's face, but his head was averted. She sighed, a troubled look in her eyes. How to penetrate the armor of the boy's reserve and sensitiveness was a problem which sorely puzzled her. Once he had grudgingly admitted that his father had been "sent up." But any allusion to the mother was met by stubborn silence. However, she was determined to break through this wall of reserve and compel the boy to recognize his rightful position in his relationship to his mother.

"Tony," she said at length, as she turned the boy around so that he stood facing her, "you are building a fence all around your white room to keep the little boys — and your mother — out. Unless you forgive them, the windows and doors will never fly wide open. Hate and love cannot live together in the same room. One must go."

Tony looked straight at her, his questioning eyes full of growing fear.

"But — she — ain't — no good," he muttered.

"Oh, my dearest boy," never say such a thing again! God made her, and when she was a little baby she was as good as your Li'les' Kid. Oh, Tony, you are only a little

boy! You do not know what terrible things she has had in her life to make her what she is. She has not known of God or love. Tony, you will never say such a thing again, will you?"

He shyly put his arm about the girl, seeing her brown eyes full of tears.

"Aw, Miss Ellen, I won't, but yer don' know. Jes de same, I'll try. Mebbe I'll let her peek in tru de fence till I git us'd ter her. De li'le boys kin come inter de yard some." Tony wondered at the choking sensations in his throat and even in his heart as he hastily rubbed his eyes.

Miss Ellen hugged the boy tightly to her. He little knew that the tears were for him and for the sorrow which had cast its blight upon his soul.

"Say, Miss Ellen, I can't stay dis mornin'. I jes come 'cause—oh, 'cause—it rests er feller ter talk ter yer—de tired feelin' in de white room. Say, it makes me sort o' feel nex' ter Him ter talk ter yer, Miss Ellen."

The girl, speechless and heartful, suddenly bent down and kissed the boy on his pale cheek. Tony stood still, the red again flooding his throat and brow, the choking sensation creeping back into his throat. Not ungently he pushed her from him, and with stumbling steps turned away.

"Aw, cut it," he said huskily, "I ain't—no kid."

He wondered, troubled, at the turmoil within him as he

walked over to the window. This first kiss had aroused in his mind the memory of another just such a kiss which had come to him in the long ago—his dreams, as he called those hazy pictures of the past.

"Tony." He turned to face Miss Ellen, and saw in her hand a flower, a rose, a white rose. In an instant his eyes were alight.

"Gee, it's de real t'ing, fer sure!"

"Yes, my Tony, it is for you."

"Fer me? Fer me ter take ter de tenerment?"

"Yes, dear, to show to all your friends,—to Maggie, whom you must bring to me; to Mrs. Murphy—and to your—mother."

She gave the rose to Tony, placing it first in a slender glass vase. Holding it in his hand, he gazed wonderingly at the exquisite whiteness of its satin petals.

"An' yer sed His house hed nicer an' whiter ones dan dis?" He looked up incredulously.

"Yes, Tony."

"An' love is purtier dan er rose, an' His love purtier dan er yard full of roses." He mused for a moment, then turned to Miss Ellen. "Say, Miss Ellen, I gotter go back. Yer knows how I feels 'bout dis. An', say, Miss Ellen, I does love yer ter beat de band, an'—say—mebbe de fence 'll bust down—some day."

The young teacher watched him as he trudged down

the street. With him and even preceding him, loving thoughts had reached the tenement to make his day a bright and happy one.

Tony stole into the empty room once more, his eyes glowing excitedly. Placing the rose on an upturned box where the sunlight could fall upon it, he hurried into Maggie's room for the baby.

"Say, give me der kid, an' say, Maggie, in jes 'bout ten minutes yer kin come an' see wot I brung from Miss Ellen."

Before the girl had fully grasped Tony's mysterious message, he had vanished.

Triumphantly the boy held up the one treasure in his possession, so that the baby eyes might fully behold the wondrous rose.

"See, Li'les' Kid, d'yer see? Dat's de dope—de rose dat Tony's been tellin' yer 'bout."

The two wee hands went out in joyful appreciation.

"Gee," muttered the boy, "wusht youse wuz clean like it, an' de room, too. I never seed sech dirt before."

He looked about the chaotic apartment, the uncleanliness affecting his senses as it had never before.

"Gee, ef dat rose is ter live in dis place, I'll hev ter git busy an' clean de room, fer sure. De rose looked whiter in Miss Ellen's room."

With Tony, action followed abruptly on the heel of decision. In less time than one could consider possible, he

had borrowed a broom and was wielding it awkwardly, yet energetically, and to some purpose.

The volume of dust puzzled him. "Gee, de rose can't stan' dis, nor de kid neder."

He thought for a moment, then pulled out rags and paper from the windows, and, after hiding the babe under the bed-covers and placing the rose in a covered box, he calmly proceeded to finish his task, despite the screams of rage which proceeded violently from under the ragged quilt.

"Never min', Li'les' Kid, youse gotter yell, 'cause dis room jes hez ter be clean."

Suddenly the door burst open and a neighbor's voice called out through the cloud of thick dust:

"Wot yer a-doin', Tony? Don't yer know, yer fool kid, dat ye'll ketch cold 'thout no dirt?"

Tony, never stopping, yelled out good-naturedly:

"Aw, shet up. We're goin' ter be clean in dis room."

"Yer ain't got no sense, kid," came from another.

"It's dirt wot keeps yer warm."

"Say,"—a third complaint—"you'll get sick, sure."

The boy shrugged his thin shoulders and swept on. Some one coughed.

"Say, yer darn kid, quit it. It's makin' me sick already."

"Den go back ter yer own place an' lemme be. Say,"—Tony paused—"I'll let yer in ter see de show ef ye'll go now."

Silently, one by one, they stared at the white blossom.

After considerable discussion on the part of the audience, some one admonished tactfully:

"Aw, let the kid be."

"Yes, 't ain't none of our bizness," grudgingly acknowledged another.

However, in less time than ten minutes every woman and child in the tenement knew of the clean room, and more than a dozen curious eyes followed Maggie to the door with envious expectancy.

With a half-frightened expression, Maggie confronted the white rose and the excited boy, while the baby laughed and crowed in Tony's arms.

"Miss Ellen, she give it ter me," he whispered proudly.

Maggie dropped down on the floor in front of the box while Tony held the door wide open for the impatient neighbors who came crowding in.

Silently, one by one, they stared at the white blossom. They saw the changed room, the crouching girl, the boy and the babe, and with awe on their faces they stole away.

The day drifted into late afternoon. When the last rays of sun fell into the bare room, they rested upon the figure of a woman whose life lay written upon her haggard face and shrinking form.

With her hands clasped before her, sobs shaking her breast, her eyes full of despair, she stood before the rude box.

CHAPTER IV

THE SERMON OF THE ROSE

SEATED in her disorderly kitchen, with her ample feet displayed on the stove and her mind divided between the *Police Gazette* and a subtile premonition of some mysterious force at work of which she was ignorant, Mrs. Murphy weighed both curiosity and literature carefully in the scale of her inclinations and chose the former.

Consequently, with a superb disregard for the confusion about her, she set forth on her tour of investigation. Nor did she have far to go.

An epidemic of house-cleaning had broken out in the tenement. From every door, every window, there poured a dusty forerunner of the cleanliness that was to come.

She soon learned of Tony's clean room and of a rose which some wonderful, mysterious person had given him the day before.

Mrs. Murphy gasped in amazement and forthwith hur-

ried to Tony's room where she found the boy busily washing the baby.

"Hello, Murphy, come on in an' set down. Me an' de Li'les' Kid wuz er comin' ter tell yer all 'bout de rose an' de show. Had n' time ter tell yer las' night."

The Irishwoman sat down heavily, and for the first time in her voluble life was speechless. She saw that the barren room was spotless and that even the windows were clean. She watched the boy curiously as he dressed the wriggly bit of humanity. She stared at the rose, still bravely holding its own.

After the lapse of a few minutes, during which time she had furtively and repeatedly wiped her eyes, she broke out:

"Aye, an' 't is the luck thet's been give ter yez, Oi'm a-thinkin', Tony, me b'y. Och, an' the rose! 'T is it as makes me think of the auld counthry. Me mither's house had 'em growin' forninst the shed. Aye, it's a sad day Oi married the divil of a Pathrick, say Oi."

And as she wept, she rocked herself to and fro to the detriment of the old rocker.

"An' who did yer say wuz after a-givin' yez the rose, Tony?" Mrs. Murphy leaned forward expectantly and was much taken aback by the direct reply.

"Miss Ellen, de teacher up to de school." The baby, fully dressed, was held up for critical inspection. Tony, humming a snatch of a Kindergarten song, smiled happily.

Mrs. Murphy pondered.

"Aye, an' 'tis a grand Oirish name that, Ellen. D'yez be thinkin' she's Oirish, lad? No? 'T is de Oirish dat hez de big hearts, b'y. An' is it flowers she do be givin' away in her school, Tony?"

"Nope, she gives away love, an'—"

"Don't say nothin' till I come, Tony," called out Maggie, thrusting her head in the doorway and anxiously scanning the two. "Hev yer told anything?" she asked as she joined them a moment later.

"Nope." Tony looked up and then grinned. "Gee! look, Murphy, ef she ain't gone an' got de wad off'n her block. Say, ain't yer de peach now?"

Maggie, taking the baby, blushed at the unexpected compliment. But Mrs. Murphy had not come to discuss hair-dressing. No, she was bent on knowing the secret of Tony's good fortune, and he certainly had not, as yet, given any reasonable or sane explanation of the problem.

"An' 'tis love she do be givin' away, is it? Pooh! de divil—"

"Aw, yer don' know 'bout Miss Ellen's kin' o' love. She ain't got none of yer tenerment kin', yer bet she ain't! She's got de real dope, an' it's nothin' yer ever heerd 'bout, dat's a cinch."

"Say, Tony," pleaded Maggie, rising and giving the baby back to him, "wait; don't tell Murphy till I gets ole Granny

Flaherty. She's asked ter hear yer tell 'bout the white room an'—Him. I tried to tell her, but I don't know how. Will yer wait?"

"Sure, Mike!" Tony replied shyly.

The girl flew, and in a short time reappeared, bringing not only old Granny Flaherty, but blind Peter Dolan; Jonesy, the seamstress; and Isaac, a deformed boy.

Tony, somewhat abashed by his sudden notoriety, clung to the babe in his arms, vaguely wondering how to begin.

Mrs. Murphy characteristically broke the ice.

"An' phwat koind of a teacher is it that's after a-givin' away roses an'—love?"

She jerked the last word out with scorn, her Irish nose skeptically elevated, her arms defiantly folded.

Tony smiled absently. He knew the depths of Mrs. Murphy's heart.

"Aw, Miss Ellen's all right! She's de real t'ing; nothin' bogus 'bout her. She's got real hair, too." Grinning, he glanced at the transformed Maggie, who blushed furiously.

"Onct, she telled 'bout er kid wot lived same's we, an' he had er white room same's we got. Dat's yer heart, yer know—de white room is. An' onct he found er yard of roses an' he picked one an' stuck it inter his white room wot wuz dark an' empty. An', gee! de rose—it means love—it busted everything wide open, an' de love lived dere an' made him good.

"Love is wot done it, yer see. When yer gits yer white room full of it, de real dope, den yer t'inks it, an' when yer t'inks it, yer jes lives it. See? Wot's inside yer, gits out in wot yer does an' says. Seems's if yer can't help yerself none; it jes comes."

Tony gazed thoughtfully at the rose. "I tells yer," he went on, forgetting his guests, so absorbed was he in the vision uppermost in his mind, "we all ain't been learned to t'ink right; we're all off, but we ain't ter blame none. We don' know 'bout white rooms an' white roses. We jes sass an' cuss an' swat de feller wot ain't onter our game. Dunno how 'tis, I jes know 'tis, dat's all."

Mrs. Murphy sat upright, eyeing the boy carefully.

"An' where do we be after a-learnin'—of dis love, say Oi. 'T is not in er tiniment Oi'll be after a-thinkin'; it would n't be no go here. 'T is the fists that does the job of settlin'. Phwat say yez, Jonesy? Ain't it a divil of a yarn de kid's been givin' us?"

Jonesy shook her weary head, folding her seldom idle hands luxuriously. "The sound of it is good ter me, Murphy," she answered slowly.

"Aye, an' ter me, begorra, but phwat Oi'm a-thinkin' is, where do yez be gittin' hold of dis love, dis new kin'?"

Tony rummaged in his ragged pockets and brought forth from their depths a bit of paper.

"An' she wrote dis, too. L-o-v-e, dat's love. God is love. Dat's wot He is, see?"

"It's wrote on dis. Miss Ellen, she learned me how ter spell it. G-o-d, God."

He held up the paper so that his visitors could see. Mrs. Murphy crossed herself hurriedly, while Maggie leaned hungrily forward. "An' she wrote dis, too. L-o-v-e, dat's love. God is love. Dat's wot He is, see?"

The silence was profound as the simple sentence sank deep into the eager souls of the listeners.

The babe began to droop sleepily, and Tony swayed to and fro.

"Yep, an' 't is His love wot Miss Ellen tells of, an' when yer gits it inter yer hearts, an' gits it right, yer kin t'ink right, an' yer loves everybody an' people wot does yer dirt, an' Dagoes an' Chinks."

"Tell 'bout de boy," eagerly whispered Maggie, touching Tony's arm.

He smiled gently. Somehow Maggie's sad life and her need had found an answering chord in his own desolate existence.

"Gee!" The word fell caressingly from his lips, and a soft light shone in his blue eyes.

The girl prodded him once more. "Tell of the baby, an' the star, yer know." Her own eyes were glowing as she leaned forward on the floor, her arms clasped about her knees, her lips apart and her slight form trembling with excitement.

So, holding his baby sister in his arms, and facing the strange, uncouth audience, the little lad of the tenement led his guests back to the first Christmas night, to the stable and to the Child of Bethlehem.

After a brief silence Isaac sighed wistfully, "It's very beautiful, but it ain't fer us, is it, Tony?"

Tony reflected.

"Ye-es; Miss Ellen, she sed, if we b'lieved an' knowed, it is ourn, an' if we love an' gits onter His game of lovin', we gits ter be jes like—" he looked down at the sleeping babe cradled so close to his heart, and a smile of infinite tenderness came into his thin little face—"jes like de Li'les' Kid," he added softly.

Maggie led her friends out of the room. Only Mrs. Murphy remained, her abnormal curiosity not yet having been gratified.

She stared hard at the rose, and with some awe at Tony. Was this the boy who, only two weeks ago, had come to her door asking of love? She shook her head.

"Aye, lad, an' the divil may fly away wid me ef it ain't a quare thing how luck comes ter sum. Sure, an' 'tis yez thet orter be after a-havin' it all, Tony, me b'y, yez are thet foine."

Tony smiled thoughtfully. His belief in the possibilities of Luck was vague, but swiftly there arose the picture of the girlish teacher, as she stood before him yesterday,

the white rose in her hand, and in her eyes the reflection of the secret for which Tony so hungrily longed.

"An' He sez, sez He, thot yez must be after a-forgivin' folks—loike yer ma?" The Irishwoman eyed Tony narrowly.

He carried the child to the mattress, covered her with the old shawl, then turned to the box, gazing down into the folded heart of the rose.

"Yes." He answered slowly and thoughtfully. Mrs. Murphy was bewildered, but she had always respected Tony's reserve, so, rising, she kindly asked:

"An' when are yez to be seein' the teacher wid the darlin' Oirish name?"

Tony's face lit up instantly.

"Gee! Mos' forgot. Me an' de Kid here, de Li'les' Kid, is er goin' ter-day, an' Miss Ellen, she's goin' ter learn me jes how ter keep de Kid clean. An', Murphy"—Tony caught hold of his visitor's scant skirt—"Miss Ellen, she's er goin' ter give her some li'le dresses."

"Aye, an' ain't Oi been a-tellin' yez thot luck's comin', Tony? An' 'tis yez thot'll be gittin' go swell thot's Murphy thot yez will not be wantin' ter see." There was a note of anxiety in the hearty voice which did not escape the boy.

With a gentleness before unknown to him, he stroked Mrs. Murphy's rough red hand.

"Nope, Murphy. Me an' de Li'les' Kid 'll allus love yer; an' some day yer will learn how ter love right yerself. Yer kin go ter Miss Ellen; she hez it all in her, an' His love, too. Miss Ellen, she'll learn yer how ter love Pat—ef yer want. Say, Murphy," Tony came up to the woman as she stood on the threshold, "Yer kin say dis, 'God is love.' Gee! jes a-t'inkin' it makes a feller's day nicer."

CHAPTER V

"DE LI'LES' KID"

WITH his usual cheery "'Lo dere, Miss Ellen, I brung her," Tony placed the open-eyed baby in the teacher's outstretched arms.

She held the little one closely to her while the tears started to her eyes as she saw the pitiful attempt the lad had made to care for the little one.

"Oh, Tony, I am so glad you have brought her to me! Isn't she cute and dear?"

"Yep, an' see her li'le han's, Miss Ellen; dey's so sof' an' purty—jes like yourn."

The baby gurgled and crowed as she pulled at Miss Ellen's apron.

"Tony, you are a very wonderful boy, to keep her so clean and nice." He beamed as he followed into the warm bathroom.

The next hour was one of revelation. And when the baby, his Li'les' Kid, lay in Miss Ellen's lap, spotless, and

completely transformed by the new clothes, Tony was speechless, moved to the verge of tears.

In the sunny Kindergarten room, the wee girl in her arms, Miss Ellen turned to the silent boy who stood regarding both of his dearest possessions with an expression of sadness, too old, but too habitual, for his child-face to bear.

"What is it, Tony?" she asked softly.

"Nawthin', only I wusht she could allus look dis way. She's jes made ter be loved an' ter be clean. Gee! Here's where I gits busy an' looks fer a job where I kin make de dough."

Miss Ellen held out her other arm, and, drawing the boy to her, talked at length to him, trying to make this man-child forget.

Over the desk hung a copy of the beautiful Madonna of the Workshop. Tony's restless eyes fell upon it, then upon the girl with the babe in her arms, and the far-away light in her dark eyes.

Pointing to the picture, he whispered: "Say, yer jes looks like Her—an' de Li'les' Kid like Him."

An hour later Tony proudly carried the newly arrayed infant about the tenement and to Mrs. Murphy, who critically examined each tiny garment, speculating wildly on the probable cost of the outfit.

He returned to his own room. In his excitement he left

Pointing to the picture, he whispered:
"Say, yer jes looks like Her—an' de Li'les' Kid like Him."

the babe crowing and laughing on the bed. In his anxiety to tell Maggie of his afternoon talk, he forgot to watch the door.

When he returned he saw to his horror that some one had entered the room, the one whom he so intensely dreaded and hated. She—was bending over the babe.

Tony stood still, vague emotions struggling within him. The child, frightened, gave a little whimper. Instantly the motherhood of the boy was aroused. Springing forward, he snatched the infant from the bed, not heeding the sorrowful glances that followed him. Gathering the tiny, trembling form to him, and crooning softly, Tony left the room.

CHAPTER VI

A BROTHER

THE two little boys in the early sunlight sat on a pile of old boxes, watching the gymnastics of Danny Mulligan, who, with true epicurean joy, was endeavoring to lick a liberal supply of molasses from his freckled face by means of a very nimble tongue.

So engrossed were they in their envious jeering that they did not heed Tony, who had been calling to them.

"Hi, dere, yer kids! Can't youse hear me? Come, git yer breakus!"

They scampered in all haste to where their brother wearily waited.

Tony, pale and heavy-eyed, hurried them to the bake-shop where, before entering, with suspicion born of experience, he asked, "Hed nothin' ter eat?"

"Nope."

"He hed an orange wot he swiped, he did." The smaller

Danny Mulligan, with true epicurean joy, was endeavoring to lick a liberal supply of molasses from his freckled face by means of a very nimble tongue.

boy grinned maliciously. The other pounced upon him, and with a few well-directed and skilfully avoided blows, screamed angrily: "Aw, —— ——, yer darn fool kid. Allus a-snitchin'."

Tony sighed as he watched them. Slowly a new thought entered his head.

"Say, I ain't sure but youse hed better cut out dem kin' o' words. Gee! I jes b'lieve dat dey ain't nothin' He'd hear us say, nor Miss Ellen; she ain't stuck on 'em. Say, yer kids, jes cut it, d'yer hear?" he added clinchingly, as the thought grew into conviction.

The boys stared, but this new Tony was not one whom they dared to disobey; so, silently they waited while he purchased and divided equally between the two ravenous youngsters a half-dozen buns. Like hungry animals they fell upon the speckled, shiny buns, and devoured them in less than a moment,—so it seemed to the hungry watcher.

The night had been a hard one for Tony, for the room had had one other occupant, the one whose coming meant trouble, and whose staying all night ofttimes meant a long and watchful vigil. On such occasions the Li'les' Kid never left the boy's arms.

He thought of his night with increasing bitterness as he silently regarded his two little brothers.

"Aw, dey's nothin' but kids, jes li'le boy kids. Dey ain't hed no chanst, dey ain't—"

A sudden longing filled him, a longing to rid himself of all these burdens. His responsibility for the two souls before him weighed him down oppressively.

"Aw, de Li'les' Kid, she's 'nough," he muttered argumentatively.

Something of the struggle within must have been manifest on his face, for the youngest boy, who had been closely and shrewdly eyeing him, held out a bit of his bun.

"Say, Tony, youse kin hev dis, ef yer want."

Touched by the unheard-of act and thought, Tony looked down upon him.

"Nope, kiddo," he mumbled brokenly, "I ain't so hungry. Yer kin eat it."

He turned to go; the older boy clutched his sleeve, asking in a whisper: "Is"—pointing to their room—"sleep?"

"Yep. Yer kids play out. I'll be back soon an' den we'll go to de park, mebbe. Keep shy an' don' yer go er swearin' none."

With his heart full of rebellion, Tony hurried to Miss Ellen. The sight of his sworn foe, Mike Casey, standing on the curbstone, sent quivers of hate through his much disturbed mind.

"Why, my blessed boy!" exclaimed Miss Ellen, as she saw him, "what is the matter, dear? Are you sick? No?" She looked at Tony sharply, keenly, then nodded briskly to herself.

"Tony, you are just in time to eat lunch with me. Oh, yes, you must. And to think that we are to have each other's company, and are to eat the good things that are in my lunch-basket!"

She disappeared, leaving the boy scarlet and shame-faced, helplessly waiting. How did she know? he wondered.

Miss Ellen returned with not only one but three lunch-baskets. Obviously she had been on a foraging expedition, but Tony did not question.

The low tables were quickly spread.

"Come, Tony, you are to be my guest of honor. We can learn our lessons later."

Miss Ellen marveled that the boy, half starved though he was, should eat so slowly and silently; yet he did not once refuse whatever she placed before him. She more than suspected the long night's vigil, for Maggie had been to see her.

Luncheon over, and the lessons finished, Tony leaned toward Miss Ellen and, with sad, pleading eyes, said slowly: "Miss Ellen, 't ain't no use. De white room ain't never goin' ter bust. Dey's too much of — hate dere."

Silence for a moment, then Miss Ellen's voice, earnest, decisive: "Need there be any hate, Tony?"

He shook his head.

"Dere is, an' I wants ter git away off fr'm it, an' take de Li'les' Kid, an' git a job some'eres. Does yer know ef I kin git er job?"

The teacher turned away her head. She could not bear the look in those blue eyes. "What of your mother and the little boys—your brothers?"

"Aw, dey's—" he stopped, the episode of the bun recurring to him. He silently rose and strode unevenly to the window.

"Tony, have you asked God to take the hate away?"

"Nope," sorrowfully.

"Have you ever tried to think love toward the boys and—your mother?"

"I dunno, Miss Ellen, dey ain't all de time hate as it use'ter be, jes till—las' night." He paused, the weary old look creeping into his face.

"I tells yer, sometimes I t'ink de kids ain't ter blame none. Dey don' know 'bout de white room. Mebbe I'll git busy an' tell 'em." He moved toward the girl, every motion of his tired little body an appeal.

"It's de hate—I ain't game, Miss Ellen, an' it ain't jes—her—but it's Mike Casey, too. Use'ter be thet I jes wanted ter kill him—I hated him so. He allus laffs at me, an' onct I hit him er swat wid er rock—long 'go." He hung his head shamefacedly.

"I am very sorry, but now that you know better, you are going to try to forgive him. You see, he does not know of the white room nor of the white rose; he has no beautiful thoughts to make him think right. He is just another

weak brother for us to love and to forgive and to feel sorry for."

"Him a brother? Aw, don' kid er feller."

Miss Ellen smiled in spite of herself, his scorn was so genuine.

"Why, yes, Tony. God is the Father of us all, so that makes us all brothers. You are my dear little brother and I am your sister. Isn't that beautiful?"

"Yep—de sister part is, but, gee! Mike Casey—he's a fat lobster, dat's wot he is!"

Tony sat down on one of the little chairs. "Say, d'yer know, I wuz er waitin' till I git big 'nough, den I wuz er goin' ter lick him, an' now yer tells me I jes gotter love him an' call him—brother."

He rose suddenly and stood before the teacher, slipping his fingers nervously into her warm, white hands, and with a half-despairing apathy which struck her to the heart, he added:

"It's tough, Miss Ellen; de li'le feller loves an' forgives an' de big guy does yer dirt; it ain't fair, seems ter me. Does He want us to?"

"That is what He did himself—forgave those who were cruel to Him. Tony, you want your white room full, don't you? Of course; well, you have shut out your mother and have allowed bitter thoughts of Mike Casey to come into your room. It is a hard duty, but you are a

brave boy—you can forgive if you only make up your mind. Think a moment—what a difference it would make in your life; you could teach your brothers and the Li'les' Kid ever so much better, with your heart full of love."

"Aw, gee! I knows it, an' I wants it, but it's tough jes de same. He gits de dough an' de love—wot does I git?"

"A full white room."

Tony was silent, and when Miss Ellen brought him his second white rose, he answered her mutely.

"Bring the baby to-morrow, dear, and be sure you tell me what you did with this rose. Maggie told me of the other one." She stooped and kissed his grave lips. Tony flushed under the scarcely accustomed caress, and, carrying his rose, started for the door where he met Maggie. She begged for a whiff of the rose.

"De Kid's with Murphy," she called after him.

It was late that afternoon when Tony went into Mrs. Murphy's apartments for the baby. Mrs. Murphy met him at the door, shaking a very dusty rug and a stray offspring.

"Aye, noo. Ketch me a-hevin' a divil ev er kid bringing in durrt in here, yer bet!" she yelled in her Celtic-American accent.

Tony grinned as he surveyed the wet interior, for the good woman in her zeal had not left a table or chair unturned. The air reeked soap. The walls were a study in pastels of dripping, dirty gray. The frightened children

looked on from their observation point, the fire-escape. Never had their vigorous parent been taken with such a cleanly fever as this.

Mrs. Murphy inspected Tony's bare feet. "An' 'tis not a speck of durrt as comes inter dis. An' ef yez ain't clean in yer feet, yez can't be after a-comin'. Aye, an' 'tis a drubbin' Pat Murphy'll be after a-gittin' ef a sphot he clutters in."

"It's er good way to let Pat see dat yer love him, Murphy. A clean room does it. It helps, yer bet."

Mrs. Murphy threw up her red, wet hands. "Love and Pat Murphy! Niver!" She waved her hand melodramatically.

"I tells yer," the boy encouraged as he received his sleeping charge and cuddled her to him, "Jes yer git er t'inkin' dat yer love him. Gee! Ef I wuz tied up ter a t'ing wot I could n't git loose of, I'd try er t'inkin' dat way—mebbe it would make him decent like."

Mrs. Murphy snorted. Just then Maggie ran toward them.

"Oh, Tony, wait! Did yer tell Murphy wot yer done with yer rose?"

Tony, scarlet, shook his head. "An' yer need n't, Maggie."

"I jes will, too. Say, Murphy, Tony give Mike Casey de rose Miss Ellen give him. An' he had a note in it, too, an' Mike Casey he read the note 'loud, an' every man left

the s'loon, an' Mike Casey he locked the door an' went ter see Father Brennan. Dennis McGuire told me; he wuz there an' he heard the note, an'"—here Maggie paused in her breathless jumble for a momentary rest. Tony hung back, his eyes fixed upon the Irishwoman. He wondered if she would approve or—

"An' wot did yer write on de paper?" Mrs. Murphy eyed the boy fiercely.

"He wrote his verse, 'God is love.' Dat's wot he wrote." And Maggie glanced at Tony, who muttered, "Aw, cheese it. Yer sed 'nough." "An'," she went on, not heeding, "he telled Mike Casey dat he wuz a brother and dat he—"

"Aw, de divil fly wid yer fer a fool, Tony, a—" but the word did not come. Mrs. Murphy had ceased swearing at Tony or in his presence for several days, though she could not explain the reason for having done so.

"I knows why yer done it, Tony, I know." Maggie's eyes were joyful. "Miss Ellen she is tellin' me of Him, too."

"Aye, an' 'tis a pair of fools ye be. Git, yez hev kep' me long 'nough from me worruk. An' 'tis a good jail wot Mike Casey needs, wid Pat Murphy an' yer ma ter keep him comp'ny. Roses fer the loikes of him. Pooh!" With a grand sweep of her scant skirts and an air of hauteur borrowed from the heroine of her latest novel, Mrs. Murphy retreated to her dripping but cleanly abode and slammed the door

CHAPTER VII

MR. DORRING'S MESSAGE

THE next day Tony reluctantly told Miss Ellen of the mission of the white rose. He wondered not a little at her sudden rocking of the baby and her walking to the desk, where she stood for some time. He wondered still more at the verse she repeated softly to herself, "And a little child—" Tony did not catch the rest.

When she came back to him she kissed him again and again, much to his discomfiture.

"Dear little boy! I am so proud of my brother."

"Gee! Ain't done nothin'," he remarked happily, though somewhat bewildered.

"How about the white room now, Tony?" she asked, tremulously smiling.

The boy clasped the wee white fingers of the babe in his brown hands.

"Dunno, but I t'ink de fenc'll bust some day, mebbe.

Talked ter de kids some. Say, Miss Ellen, ain't it great de warm feelin' yer hez wen yer do somepin like wot He done!"

"Hello, Ellen! Well, well! Tony and the Li'les' Kid! How do you do, sir?"

Tony turned to look up at a tall, young man who had slipped in upon them unawares.

Over his face, as he looked down at the girl with the babe in her arms, crept an expression of reverence, which caused Tony unconsciously to glance toward the angels' faces about the Madonna in the portrait hanging on the wall.

"Well, Tony—" Mr. Dorring held out his hand. Tony gave him his own slender one, wondering at the firm clasp. An expression of admiration crept into his face in spite of his momentary doubts as to the rights of this imperturbable stranger who claimed his beloved teacher so possessively.

"I have heard of your fine work, Tony. You are a brick!"

Tony grinned as he glanced up at the girl. "Aw, it's her. I ain't done nothin'. It's jes Miss Ellen."

"I have not the slightest doubt that it is Miss Ellen. She works wonders everywhere. But you—why, you are going to remake the tenement, I hear,—run a sort of opposition to our settlement work."

Tony's eyes rested upon the babe. "Nope," he answered slowly. "I wants ter git out'n de tenerment an' give her a chanst. She's goin' ter grow up an' be like Miss Ellen."

The teacher's face was wet with tears as she placed the baby in Tony's arms.

"Very good. But let me see — you have brothers and — a mother?"

Tony sharply looked up at him, but seeing only grave and kindly interest in Mr. Dorring's eyes, he shook his head as he turned questioningly to Miss Ellen.

"Well, my boy, we can't all do what we should like to. You have your mother and the boys to look after. The Li'les' Kid here can't have any schooling for several years. You are such a man that you wouldn't think of leaving a woman alone in the world."

Mr. Dorring lowered his voice, and his expression became as gentle as that of the girl beside him, as he added earnestly:

"Whatever she is, or has been, she is a woman, and your mother. Some day a danger may come to her; then you will realize what a mother means. Take care of her, Tony, and of the kids. Isn't that about it, Ellen?"

The teacher's face was wet with tears as she placed the baby in Tony's arms. Holding him closely to her, she whispered:

"My little brother! God bless you — good-by."

The merry-eyed gentleman escorted him to the door, which he held wide open.

"Good-by, my boy," he said heartily; "it's a tough world, but love wins out in the long run." He looked back at the girl standing just behind him.

CHAPTER VIII
THE FIRE

"Rock-a-bye, Baby,
On the tree-top.
When the wind blows
The cradle will rock."

THE low voice sang on in spite of the weariness in the tones. On the bed a woman turned heavily, raising herself on her elbow to stare in agony of spirit at the singer, then threw herself back against the wall in feverish abandon.

For three days she had lain there, fever-stricken and, what was more, conscience-stricken — probed to the quick by the ruthless hand of her past.

Gently, but in silence, Tony waited upon her. In his reserve, his unvoiced aversion, she felt the sting of rebuke. The three days had been full of mental awakening.

The song — where had he learned it?

Very dimly at first, then more strongly and clearly, came

the memories of her childhood, girlhood, and the sweet bliss of first motherhood. Under the rose arbor in her country home she sang the same song to her doll; later to her first-born — Tony.

"Oh, rock-a-bye, hush-a-bye,
Brother is near"—

Tony had paraphrased to suit the situation. The woman groaned; the tears trickled through her fingers.

She dragged herself despairingly through the mire of years that followed.

On the mattress lay the little boys. The fever had taken hold of their ill-nourished little bodies, and they tossed to and fro.

Tony rose, the baby in his arms, covered them with the dirty blanket and soothed them softly until they slept once more.

"Poor li'le kids, dey's nothin' but babies!"

At the side of the bed he paused. The sleeper was breathing heavily. Then turning, Tony softly opened the door and, gently carrying his precious burden, hurried to the security and shelter of the ash-barrel.

Raising the baby's face to his, he kissed her blue lips.

"Say, does yer know yer got a name, Li'les' Kid? Ellen's wot yer go by now. After Miss Ellen. Ain't yer de swell, do? Gee! It's up ter youse ter git on ter her game of livin', Li'les' Kid. Youse kin grow like her an' hev a li'le

white room wot ain't never even hed a curtain, it's so full o' sun. You betcherlife, li'le Ellen!" He smiled quaintly to himself. "Aw, ain't it de talk, de white rose! An' jes ter t'ink how full everyt'ing is sence we knowed it. Ain't sure but dat de fence has busted some. Mebbe—He'll sort o' ketch onter us, me an' you, wot is tryin' ter reach up ter Him. Yer is. Mebbe Tony'll git dere soon as his white room is—gee! Dere's smoke over in de tenerment. Li'les' Kid, looks ter me ter be on our side, too." He rose quickly, and, stepping out, saw a thin blue line writhing snake-like through the walls above the room where lay his sick little brothers and—mother.

Instantly an alarm was sent out. From afar he heard the clang of the fire-engine. A moment later it dashed by him into the court beyond.

Tony stood still, rooted to the spot, his eyes riveted upon the window of his room. He held the babe tightly to his heart.

"Aw,—dey ain't—nothin'—ter me," he muttered doggedly as he stared at the smoke that curled in and out of the windows. A hissing sound, and a flame leaped upward, downward, lapping fiendishly at the room below.

Still the boy stood, not heeding the people who were thronging through the alleyway to the court. He could hear the screams of women and children.

"Dey is sick, an' de kids is li'le an' dey's—my brothers—"

Gently he dropped the baby into the barrel and was gone.

"She is your mother. Some day a danger may come to her, then you will realize what a mother is." The words came back as distinctly as if they had just been uttered in his ears. His head whirled; a thousand emotions shook him.

"She is sick, Li'les' Kid—oh, I mus' go. She is sick, an' she's your mother, an' oh, baby, she's my mother! O God!"

"Say, Li'les' Kid, my baby Ellen, stay here in de barr'l till Tony gits back; don' cry. De fire's burnin', and dey is in it, an' Tony mus' go." Gently he dropped the baby into the barrel and was gone.

"My mother!" With this battle-cry, he pushed his way through the crowd. He stumbled over a confusion of dogs and children; fell over the hose; he dashed this way and that, until he reached the wet pavement.

"Hold on there!" yelled a policeman, as the boy scrambled to his feet. A cinder fell on his hand; he did not heed the burn.

A fireman grabbed him by the arm. He evaded the outstretched hand, and before the eyes of all vanished through the doorway.

"It's Tony!" wailed a girl's voice, and the crowd took up the cry, "Tony!" Then a hush fell upon them as they anxiously waited.

Far up on the first landing they saw him, through the smoke and flames, a child in each arm. Cheer after cheer went up, to die away as he disappeared once more.

The fireman, who had taken the little boys from Tony, descended the ladder, his burdens lying limply in his strong arms. His coat was burned, the clothes of the children were smoking.

"Get the boy and the mother!" he cried.

Two firemen sprang forward, one up the swaying ladder, while the other fought his way through the entrance.

In the meanwhile Tony had reached the room. His mother, in her endeavors to save herself, had fainted, the last words of Tony ringing in her ears:

"I'll come back an' git yer, mother." Mother! He had never called her that before.

From every corner the hungry flames ran out their fiery tongues as the boy staggered out into the hall, half dragging, half carrying the heavy form.

"Mother, mother," he pleaded fearfully, "it's yer Tony, mother—"

He fell, blinded with the smoke and a sudden pain in his arm. Once he stopped, crushing the fire from his smoking jacket, then hurried on. His strength was almost gone as he floundered down the tottering stairway, into a sea of smoke and fire. But even in the horror the moment brought, he felt the uplift of his soul. His white room had "busted open."

"Say, God, up dere in yer white house, give a li'le feller a lift, will yer? It's Tony—" He stumbled once more as

with a superhuman effort he gathered his mother more tightly to him.

"I knows I ain't good, God, an' I hed ter swipe de bread 'cause we — wuz hungry. Say, me white room hez busted — is full — won't yer — help — me — God?"

The burden almost fell from his weak arms, still the child struggled on.

"It's my mother, wot's sick —"

The floor seemed to sink beneath him.

"O God, — she ain't hed no chanst, does yer hear — it's Tony — an' — his — mother — God-o'-love — sen' —"

CHAPTER IX

THE FULL WHITE ROOM

IT WAS late that afternoon when Tony opened his eyes. He looked about him dazedly. A white room, pretty pink and blue roses on the wall, dainty white curtains, shiny silver things on a queer-looking table, over which hung a glass. He opened his eyes very wide, indeed.

"Gee! Ef I ain't in His house!" he said aloud.

Instantly a pair of brown eyes looked into his blue ones. Tony smiled feebly. Miss Ellen almost sobbed in her joy.

"Oh, Tony, little brother, I am so glad, so glad—I was so afraid." She seemed to be talking to herself, Tony thought, as he clung to her hands. He was puzzled at the queer sensations that were making themselves manifest in his body. His bandaged head—where was his other arm? He looked up at the girl above him.

"Wot's de matter wid me? An' why are you cryin'?"

"Dear Tony, Miss Ellen is so happy. She was so afraid that you were going from her."

"To His house?"

She nodded.

"Well, I dunno; I'd like ter go dere. I've been all tired out, an' ef I would n't git lonely, I'd jes 's lief go." His voice trailed off to a whisper. The girl watched him silently. Suddenly he looked up, a half-frightened expression on his face.

"De fire—I 'member now. Gee!"

He seized her arm—"Where's de Li'les' Kid?"

"There, dear, she is all right—there. She is in the next room. I found her in the ash-barrel and carried her away with me."

The door softly opened and the cheery man with the big voice peered at him.

"Ho, ho, my young man! Awake? Well, you have certainly covered yourself with glory and bandages. Tony, I am proud of you."

The child looked up at Miss Ellen, a smile lighting his white face.

"Miss Ellen, it's busted open, wide open, de white room; an'—me mother come right in."

Miss Ellen bowed her head. Mr. Dorring turned away. Silence fell upon the trio. Tony quietly asked, "Where is she, my mother, an' de li'le boys?"

"They are here."

"In dis house?"

"Yes, dear." Miss Ellen lovingly patted his free hand.

"Gee! Yer house mus' be ez big ez yer heart, Miss Ellen."

"You bet!" The man's voice forcibly conveyed his sentiments. "And there's room for me there, too. What do you think of that?"

Tony smiled shrewdly.

"Aw, yer her feller."

They laughed. Miss Ellen stooped over and kissed him. Mr. Dorring rose.

"Well, don't let him talk too much, Ellen. I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Miss Ellen?"

"Yes, my boy."

"I ain't seen de Li'les' Kid fer so—long. Kin I hev her?" There was no resisting the pleading tones. A moment later the wee sleeper's head rested in its accustomed place. Tony beamed happily.

"She's got er name now. She's Ellen,—does yer care?"

"No, indeed. I am proud, little brother."

He smiled joyously. How beautiful was the world of love!

"I guess I don't want ter go ter His house yet. I wants ter take care of de boys, de Li'les' Kid—an' me mother." He lovingly caressed the word.

In her outstretched hand she held— a white rose.

Miss Ellen leaned over him. "Tony, how would you and little Ellen like to live with me—Mr. Dorring and me,—always, and be our little brother and sister?"

"Ter be yer own fer keeps?" he questioned wonderingly.

"Yes, for keeps."

He looked down at the little head and sighed.

"It 'ud be jes de t'ing fer her, but dere 's me mother an' de kids. Nope. I can't let 'em go, now." He turned his head away.

"Dear little boy! Miss Ellen did not mean that. Being my boy and living with me does n't mean that your duty to your mother is lost. No, indeed, but we won't talk of it just yet. You are going to get well first. Here is Mr. Dorring. Stephen, I have told him. Will you explain all we mean to do?"

"All right, dear. You must go down-stairs, for some friends of Tony's are here asking for you."

He escorted the young teacher to the door, where he drew her to him. When he turned, he met Tony's steady gaze.

"You don't think you are the only one who has a white rose, do you?"

Tony reached out his one hand understandingly.

Down-stairs, Miss Ellen faced a strange assortment of visitors—Tony's friends from the tenement.

There was Mrs. Murphy, with an alarming bit of millinery upon her head; Granny Flaherty, with a burnt shawl over

her gray hair; Mrs. Mulligan, and blind Peter Dolan; a fat man, and a dozen others whom Miss Ellen did not recognize.

Maggie sprang forward and clutched the teacher's arm. From her wild eyes looked the question which no one dared to voice.

"Tony will live," Miss Ellen said simply.

"Is the—blessed—darlint—h-hurt?" whispered Mrs. Murphy.

"Yes, but there is nothing to worry about. He will live to finish the work that has been given him to do."

She talked to them for several moments,—a cheering word here, a loving smile there, till the anxious people became comforted.

As they filed out of the room, the fat man slipped a parcel tied up in florist's tissue-paper into Miss Ellen's hand. "Ast Maggie," he said in a husky whisper. Miss Ellen looked puzzled.

"It's Mike Casey," explained Maggie. He's found out 'bout his white room—yer know."

Miss Ellen opened the package; tears started to her eyes.

"Maggie,—you thank them—for Tony and me."

Upstairs in his white bed Tony waited, the baby still in his arms. His eyes shone with a far-away glow; his heart was full of light.

The door opened—Miss Ellen came into the room. In her outstretched hand she held—a white rose.

HERE ENDS "TONY'S WHITE ROOM" HOW
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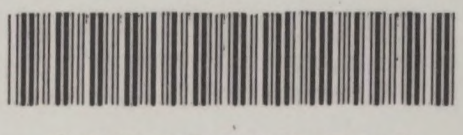

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